

ORIGINS OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL AND YVES CONGAR

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The transformation of the post-Tridentine theology, which could be characterized as apologetic and strongly linked to authority, was anticipated by several movements before the Vatican II. The renewal introduced by the Council derives from the liturgical movement and the quickly developing ecumenical movement. Other ideas come from the theological program *ad fontes*, i.e. return to the biblical and the patristic sources of theology. That influenced thinking about ecclesiology and Church's self-understanding. Last but not least, we must consider many other local activities of lay people around the entire world.

Among many Christians who sought the reform of the Church there was one French theologian, member of the Dominican order, who influenced the Council, especially in the fields of ecclesiology, ecumenical theology and theology of laity. His name is Yves Marie Joseph Congar OP.¹

Yves Congar

Congar was born in 1904 in Sedan in France and he joined the Dominican order when he was 21 years old. He was sent to the convent "Le Saulchoir" in Belgium where the Dominican *studium generale* was located. During the study of philosophy (i.e. the first years of his theological formation) he was very much influenced by Jacques Maritain.²

¹ As far as the following historical information about Congar's life and works is concerned, see J. Famerée, "Aux origines de Vatican II: La démarche théologique d'Yves Congar" (*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 1, 1995), 121–138.

² Congar's admiration for Maritain is explained in the best way by his own words: "Il y avait [Maritain] une orthodoxie littéraire, philosophique, politique, autant que dogmatique et religieuse. Il était entendu que Ghéon était le plus grand dramaturge, del

Then he studied theology under professors such as A. Gardeil or M. D. Chenu.³ Especially, the study of the original writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas thoroughly inspired him. Thanks to the engagement with the original Aquinas' theology Congar took a certain distance from the neo-scholastic theology of the 19th century. His theological method, since that time, was the return to the biblical sources and the patristic writings. In 1934 he became the professor of ecclesiology at Le Saulchoir. At the same time, Congar started with several ecumenical activities. The results of this very first effort were *Cahiers pour le protestantisme* published by Cerf in 1935.⁴ He wanted to combine history with ecclesiology to further the unity of Christians. He was inspired by the historical variety of the forms of the Church's traditions deriving from biblical origin and by the diversity of the theological thinking in Church Fathers in antiquity. His suggestions always lead to the pastoral goals and try to solve practical questions and problems of the Church. Congar was convinced that the Church must make itself intelligible to

Sartre le plus grand sculpteur, Maurice Denis un peintre sans rival, etc. À vrai dire, Maritain lui-même dépassait de beaucoup cela." Y. Congar, *Journal d'un théologien 1946–1956* (Paris: Cerf, 2000), 35.

³ Chenu inspired Congar in the field of ecumenical theology. Congar learnt about The Faith and Order movement (F&O) of the World Council of Churches from Chenu. F&O has been founded in 1910 as the very first ecumenical movement and its main goal was "to proclaim the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, in order that the world may believe." For more information about F&O see G. Gassmann, "Faith and Order", in N. Lossky (ed.) *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), 411–413, here 412.

⁴ *Cahiers* plays the very important role in Congar's engagement with ecumenism. It was the result of his interest in the Protestant theology. He read Protestant theologians and especially works of Martin Luther. Congar sees Luther as one of the greatest thinkers in the history of Church and he placed him on the same level as Augustine and Aquinas. Congar was simply amazed by Luther's theology. Luther was a permanent source of inspiration for him. Further, Congar attended lectures and courses at Protestant faculty of theology in Paris. He also studied Kierkegaard and Barth. During Barth's visit in Paris in 1934, Congar invited him to a symposium with É. Gillson, J. Maritain, G. Marcel and others. Through these encounters, Congar was aware that Catholics have misconceptions and prejudices about the Protestant traditions. The aim of *Cahiers* was to make clear all the foundationless misunderstandings. See E. T. Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 45–46.

every human being.⁵ Congar published many articles about ecclesiology, ecumenism and patristic theology from the nineteen-thirties on. The following three most important books are to be mentioned among the number of his works:⁶ *Chrétiens désunis* (1937) about ecumenism, *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Église* (1950) about ecclesiology, mainly concerned about the viable reform of the Church and *Jalons pour une théologie du laïc* (1953) about the position of lay people inside the Church. Each of the works founded new era in the specific field of theology.

Congar's propositions toward the Council

The self-understanding of the Church after Vatican I could be summarized in two terms. First, it was viewed as *societas perfecta*. Second, it assumed a *counter-Reformation* position.⁷ Ecumenism, in fact, did not exist in the way how we understand this term today. We can rather speak about Catholic unionism in that period intending the effort to gather all non-Catholic Christians back to the Roman Catholic Church. On the other hand, Congar understood ecumenism as a true dialogue between Churches and also a challenge to all Christians. It is true that Congar began to speak about the “principles of the catholic ecumenism”. Vatican II, instead of that went further using the term “catholic principles of the ecumenism”. It means that Congar's opinion in the book *Chrétiens désunis* was still close to the unionism, but

⁵ See T. F. O'Meara, “Yves Congar Theologian of Grace in a Wide World”, in G. Flynn (ed.), *Yves Congar Theologian of the Church* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 371.

⁶ Congar had more than 700 publications in the year of the opening of the council. Some fathers of council made jokes about Congar: “Il n'est pas sûr que le P. Congar a lu tout ce qu'il a écrit.” Congar replayed them: “J'en ai lu bien plus de dix fois plus.” Quoted according to J. Famerée, “Aux origines de Vatican II”, 124.

⁷ It is true that we can speak about counter-Reformation position of the Catholic Church after the Council of Trent. However, according to contemporary historical research, it is possible to read the documents of the Council of Trent also as a Catholic attempt to reform the Church itself – as an effort to reform many problematic things inside the Church. On the other hand, Vatican I was rather an attempt to build an enclosed Catholic fort and constitute Christian life inside its walls and promote opposition mentality against the whole world. For instance, see I. Sivrić, *J. G. Strossmayer: New Light on Vatican I*, (Rome: Ziral, 1975) – about differences between the Council of Trent and Vatican I – especially 200–202.

it was definitely the first main step on the journey which culminated in *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the Decree of Vatican II. Congar dealt with the three main points in his work and tried to find their synthesis. The first one is *Unam* – the oneness. Congar proposed the theological understanding of this term instead of the juridical meaning. Unity and uniqueness of the Church, according to Congar, derives from the life of the Trinity. This unity contains also diversity of human life. Second point is the catholicity – *Catholicam*. Congar's understanding is again different from the general comprehension of the term at his time. Catholicity is not quantitative definition of the Church. Catholicity does not deal only with the geography (the Church is present in each region of the world), quantity (there are people of all nations and races in the Church), and temporality (the Church has been here since Christ without discontinuity). All these things are true, but according to Congar the primary meaning is rather qualitative. The catholicity of the Church is founded in the plenitude of the grace in Christ. The catholicity means the potency to spread out the message of the salvation among all human beings in their diversity. Finally, Congar's work explains the principle of ecumenicity – *Oecumenismo*. Because of the division of the Christians, we do not live in full catholicity, says Congar. The ecumenism is a challenge for continuous reform of the Church with the aim to achieve fuller catholicity.

The other book, which we already mentioned is a research of the authentic reform of the ecclesiology. Its title is *Vrai et fausse réforme dans l'Église*. J. Famerée summarizes this important work in this way: "L'Église concrete, avant la fin des temps, est donc à la foi sainte, fondée et animée par le Seigneur, et prend à chaque époque de l'histoire un visage humain, imparfait, modifiable et réformable."⁸

In other words, Congar tries to find what is reformable in the Church and what is not. He makes a distinction between the *Institution* and the *Community of disciples*. Further, he points out the disjunction between the *Church invisible* and the *earthly ecclesial community*. It means that there are firm points of the ecclesiology across the history but they have different expressions in each epoch.⁹ Congar seeks for a model of the

⁸ J. Famerée, "Aux origines de Vatican II", 131.

⁹ It is exactly the same that International Theological Commission (ITC) teaches in the document about the interpretation of dogmas (1990). According to this document it

reformation without schism. And in the third part of the book he deals with the reform of the Reformation.¹⁰

The very last words of the book *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Église* talk about the freedom of speech about thorny theological problems inside the Church. By an irony of fate Congar obtained an invitation to Rome in February 1952. The Holy Office invited Congar because his book about ecclesiology and the reform of the Church had become a best-seller in France, but not only there, also in the whole Western Europe. That means Congar's progressive ideas became well-known among western theologians, scholars and even bishops and clergy. It called into question the simple and clear "counter-reformation" position of the Curia. Congar had to bring all his works to Rome for verification. It seems very important to me that not every curial officer was against Congar. Giovanni Battista Montini (later Pope Paul VI) who worked with Mgr. Tardini, and even very close to Pope Pius XII, stood up for Congar and his suspected book.

The third written book which should be mentioned is *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat*. Congar wanted to rediscover the place of the lay people in the Church. The book was published in 1953 and immediately the question arose: How is it possible that this too challenging topic overcomes the censure of the Holy Office? The climate in the Church was deeply changed after the Pope's encyclical letter *Humani Generis* (1950). In short, suspicion reigned in the Church and every new idea was questionable and doubtful. Nevertheless, Congar's book on the laity was published and the main purpose of it was to appreciate: "à partir des ressources de la condition baptismale, le rôle actif

is possible to express each dogma in the new way of understanding in each epoch. There is still the same truth but deeper interpretation. We are able to reach another sense of dogma in new context and at same time dogma holds the direction toward truth without change. See ITC, *The interpretation of Dogma*, in M. Sharkey (ed.), *International Theological Commission: Texts and Documents 1986–2007*, vol. 2 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 23–54.

¹⁰ Congar had ecumenical relations with all Christians including Orthodox, Anglicans but he was particularly interested in dialogue with western European Reformation. Congar says: "[P]ouvais-je, moi surtout, traiter le problème théologique réforme sans poser la question de la Réforme protestante; et pouvait-on poser cette question sans se voir obligé de la traiter d'une façon suffisamment approfondie?" Y. Congar, *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Église* (Paris: Cerf, 1950), 16.

dec Chrétiens dans l'Église et l'importance de leur engagement dans le monde pour la réalisation du dessein de Dieu."¹¹

Vatican II, however, includes Congar's ideas about lay people into the official magisterial teaching of the Church. For instance, Chapter IV the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium* considers the place of the lay people in the Church. The Decree *Apostolica Actuositatem* is an explanation of the apostolate of laity. We can find many details about the laity also in the Decree on the mission activity of the Church *Ad gentes*. The Declaration on Christian education *Gravissimum Educationis* points out the cooperation of laity and clergy in the Catholic's schools. The importance of lay people is included in the Decree on ecumenism. Last but not least, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes* speaks about the vocation of lay people in the world.

In the last years immediately before the Second Vatican Council Congar wrote other important books on this theme. *Si vous êtes mes témoins... Trois conférences sur Laïcat, Église et Monde*, and *Vaste monde, ma paroisse*, both published in 1959.

All these writings thoroughly influenced the Conciliar documents, especially on the laity, ecclesiology and the position of the Church in the modern world. According to the scholar Otto Herman Pesch, the text that mainly influenced the pontificate of John XXIII was Hans Küng's book *Konzil und Wiedervereinigung* (The Council and Reunion).¹² I would like to correct this statement and propose that it was Congar's work that suggested to the Pope the main ideas which the Council was going to be about. Especially the idea of the scheme XVII, later *Gaudium et Spes* is embodied in Congar's work¹³ and John XXIII supported his *nouvelle théologie* from the opening speech of the Council.

¹¹ J. Famerée, "Aux origines de Vatican II", 133.

¹² O. H. Pesch, *Druhý vatikánský koncil 1962–1965: Příprava, průběh a odkaz* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 1996), 62.

¹³ In my opinion, Congar's theology of laity is an important presupposition of *Gaudium et spes*. He speaks about responsibility of lay people for the world. He uses "laity" and "the world" as the correlative terms. He points out that apostolate is a natural vocation of lay people. In other words, the mission is task of laity and the very first mission of Christians is responsibility for the world. See J. Jossua, *Yves Congar, Theology in the Service of God's People* (Chicago: The Priory Press, 1968), 116–118.

The Council, *Gaudium et Spes* and Congar

In the epoch of Pius Popes (i.e. the era from Pius IX till Pius XII) the world was seen as an enemy of the Church. Church was in permanent confrontation with secular world since *Syllabus errorum* by Pius IX in 1863 till *Humani Generis* the encyclical of Pius XII in 1950. The main effort of the Church in this period was the endeavour to give to the Christians clear instructions what they have to do, and what they have not to do. Beginning with Pope John XXIII the situation changed. The world became the space for dialogue and Church saw many of challenges and difficult questions of modern man. The relation between the Church and the world was called to question for the first time in the modern Church history. The outcome of this task is the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* promulgated by Pope Paul VI on 7 December 1965.

A Brief History of *Gaudium et Spes*

The very first beginning of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World can be seen in various speeches of John XXIII. On 11 September 1962 the Pope mentioned the distinction between the Church mission *ad intra* and *ad extra*. The open approach to the world was radically different from attitude suggested in the previous scheme *De Ecclesia*. John XXIII repeated the same emphasis one month later at the opening ceremony of the Council on 11 October. John XXIII read the pastoral letter of Cardinal Suenens, archbishop of Malines in 1962. The Pope was amazed because the letter expressed exactly, what the Council should be about. He delegated Suenens to write report about the expectations from the Council. Suenens wrote a negative statement (what Council should not be) and a positive statement (what Council should be).¹⁴ It is very probable that both John's speeches are inspired by Suenens' point of view. It leads us to the claim that the

¹⁴ See Ch. Moeller, "History of the Constitution", in H. Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. V, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World* (New York, London: Herder and Herder, 1969), 8.

Pope's principal intentions that led to the Council are incorporated in *Gaudium et Spes*.

At the end of the first session of the Council a decision was made that the matters concerning the Church would be divided into two independent documents. The first document should contain themes about self-understanding of the Church. The second one was supposed to develop questions about relation between the Church and the modern world. This differentiation was a result of big effort of cardinals Suenens and Montini, especially. A new schema was prepared in the spring 1963. One year later a new proposal was suggested which contained four chapters and five additions about concrete questions. Finally, the additions were included into the text of the Constitution and the Council discussed the schema consisting of two parts during the fourth session in October 1965. In November some amendments were added and on 7 December the text of the Constitution was accepted by 2309 votes. 75 votes were against.¹⁵

Gaudium et Spes is a great victory of the open-minded majority in the Council. Curia wanted to stay within the issue *ecclesia ad intra* only. Thanks to brave bishops, among all we should mention cardinal Suenens, and wise theologians like Chenu, Häring, Rahner and Congar we have document dealing the question of *ecclesia ad extra*. These promoters of *Gaudium et Spes* followed Pope's John ideas of the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. A very important role in development of the Pastoral Constitution was played by protestant theologian Vischer from The World Council of Churches. He sent a private letter to cardinal Guano. The letter contained his criticism and his suggestions. Scholar O. H. Pesch comments this situation in following words: "The Protestant observers were seated at the negotiating table together with Catholics."¹⁶ Karl Rahner stresses the fact that Catholic Church has started an open dialogue at the highest level with the modern world

¹⁵ As far as this historical information is concerned K. Rahner, "Úvod k Pastorální konstituci o církvi v dnešním světě *Gaudium et spes*", in *Dokumenty II. vatikánského koncilu* (Kostelní Vydří: KNA, 2002), 175.

¹⁶ O. H. Pesch, *II. vatikánský koncil*, 204. We can see that Vatican II was a truly ecumenical Council with the common concern over Christendom.

and even with the people who do not belong to the Church in this document.¹⁷

Congar's contribution to *Gaudium et Spes*

Congar was involved in the preparation of the schema XVII from the beginning of the Council. The first discussion took place from 17 to 25 May 1963 in Rome. On 16 May Congar made a note in his diary: "Je parcours les textes du schema XVII. Je les trouve mauvais: très scholastique au mauvais sens du mots, tout abstraits et philosophique, ne parlant pas 'chrétien' et ne parlant pas hommes. Mais comment faire?"¹⁸

Congar's opinion was in accordance with Rahner, Häring and others theologians. The very important meeting took place in the Séminaire français one day later.¹⁹ Mgr. Garrone discussed *Proemium* and the chapter I of schema XVII with many theologians. Daniélou, the main author of the proposal, was present, too. Congar stressed the importance of unity between anthropology and theology and he demanded more biblical and Christian expressions in the document.²⁰ As we know, final version of the Pastoral Constitution is based on this point of view.

Congar worked on the schema every day during the first intersession. His task was mainly the text of *Proemium* and the first chapter. He rewrote the text almost every day after the interventions of Council's fathers and colleagues. Congar worked under big pressure. First, his health was not good. Second, he felt the time pressure and absence of recreation.²¹ Third and the most serious circumstance was that health

¹⁷ See K. Rahner, "Úvod k Pastoralní konstituci", 176.

¹⁸ Y. Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile I.* (Paris: Cerf, 2002), 366.

¹⁹ Historical records of this meeting differ a lot. Congar's record in his diary is dated 17 May but Moeller says: "I remember meeting at Mgr. Garrone's on 15 May. Father Congar, Daniélou, Häring and Mgr. Delhay and C. Moeller were present." Ch. Moeller, "History of the Constitution", 17.

²⁰ "J'insiste beaucoup sur l'union de l'anthropologie et de la théologie, sur la nécessité de poser, à partir de la Révélation à de la foi, des affirmations de positif biblique et chrétien – pas seulement de droit naturel!" Y. Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile I.*, 367.

²¹ "Ascension. – Il n'y a pas de fête pour nous." Y. Congar, *Ibid.*, 371.

of Pope John XXIII was very bad and the continuation of the Council was uncertain.²² In spite of that, the last discussion was held on 28 May and Congar comments it like this: “Tout s’est bien passé. Les textes ont été ou seront notablement améliorés.”²³

In September 1963 cardinal Suenens organized two conferences in Malines, his Episcopal city. The first conference took place from 7 to 8 September. There were two topics: schema *De Ecclesia* and schema XVII. The theologians discussed the new chapter which was demanded for scheme XVII. Congar describes the methodology of work in Malines in following words:

Chacun présente son idée sur ce que devrait contenir ce chapitre. Enfin, Mgr Philips pense résumer l’ensemble des propositions en quatre chapitres: 1) la Mission de l’Église; 2) le Monde: a) en soi; b) modern; 3) la présence de l’Église au monde: principes généraux; 4) la présence de l’Église au monde: application.²⁴

Finally, each of the theologians got the proposition of the new text in the end of this meeting. Next reunion was arranged on 17 September in Malines again. According to Moeller, Congar played a very important role at the second meeting in Malines. He presented a draft written by Lukas Vischer from the World Council of Churches concerning the Church’s relation to the contemporary world. This concept talked about trilogy: communion (*koinonia*), ministry (*diakonia*) and witness (*martyria*). It was accepted and incorporated in the final version of the text from Malines.²⁵

However the text of Malines was not accepted at all. The main problem was that there were two drafts at once: Malines’ text and the text from the May which was prepared in Rome during the first intersession by the Theological Commission for scheme XVII. Thus, the Council had two concepts with different emphasis each. Nevertheless, the reason why the draft of Malines was criticized was different. Certain people were afraid of the influence of cardinal Suenens. They feared that

²² “Dès maintenant on dit: ce sera un conclave difficile.” *Ibid*, 369.

²³ *Ibid.*, 382.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 395.

²⁵ Ch. Moeller, “History of the Constitution”, 22.

he could obtain a very great role in the management of the schema.²⁶ Finally, it was decided to prepare an entirely new text. Congar participated here as well.²⁷ At the meeting in Zurich in February 1964 just this new pattern was discussed. Congar was in Rome at this time. He worked on the scheme *De Ecclesia*, especially on the part *De populo Dei*. He just mentioned the gathering in Zurich.²⁸ Nevertheless, Congar was dissatisfied with the reshaped text. He characterized successive discussion about Zurich draft in the following words: “Séance vraiment pitoyable.”²⁹

Congar’s critique concerned the language of the text. According to him, it was something between a theological text and a sermon. The text contained a lot of good things but they were expressed in empty phrases.³⁰ Congar was also in accordance with Rahner who thought that the text was moralizing.³¹ Alongside it, there were many general objections such as its very optimistic tone, unclear distinction between grace and nature, Bible quotations out of context and others.³² We can see that this period, summer and autumn 1964, was a crucial time in the development of schema XVII, respectively schema XIII from June 1964, later *Gaudium et Spes*.

The Curia centered around cardinal Ottaviani had a problem with the direction of the future Pastoral Constitution. It seems to be clear when we investigate what happened 6 June during the second intersession of the Mixed Theological Commission. Mgr. Franić, P. Lio and P. Tromp subsequently attacked Häring. According to Congar’s testimony, it was a real frontal attack. They argued quoting “Denzinger” and Ottaviani supported them with authority of the Holy Office. Congar, in spite

²⁶ Suenens’s point of view was supported by cardinal König, for instance, and by many others. See G. Alberigo (ed.), *History of Vatican II*, vol. III. (Maryknoll NY – Leuven: Orbis – Peeters, 2000), 312.

²⁷ See *Ibid.*, 313.

²⁸ “On parle un peu du Schéma XVII, qui se dispute en ce moment à Zurich, et des prévisions possibles pour la 3^e session.” Y. Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile II*. (Paris: Cerf, 2002), 13.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

³¹ “Il trouve que c’est verbeux et moralisant. Nous sommes d’accord pour penser que la personne du P. Häring nuit quelque peu à la cause. Car c’est de lui que vient ce genre.” *Ibid.*, 100.

³² See *Ibid.*, 99.

of his own critique of Häring, wanted to defend him, but Ottaviani forbade Congar to speak.³³ The critique of *le Sainte-Office*, as Congar called them, was made toward the question about marriage. But there is a possibility to understand it easily as an opposition to the entire scheme and his basic ideas. Since the progressive group had majority the opponents were not able to mar the work on the Constitution at all. However, they needed a scapegoat. This can be one image of the Council. Indeed, it is not pleasant at all. Fortunately, it is not the only picture of the Council we have.

A very different situation came up in September 1964 when the work continued after the holidays. Congar was involved in the meeting with the little group of Council fathers (McGrath, Schröffer, Roy, Garrone, Hengsbach) and theologians (Daniélou and Philips). They prepared six propositions for the text. For instance, they suggested not to speak about mission or evangelization itself but to speak about the mission and responsibility of the Church toward the world. Then, the concept of *signa temporum* (signs of the time) was a very important point. The draft considered the western context (Europe, North America) only. The theologians mentioned above proposed to extend the focus on the African, Asian and South-American context, too. In addition to this, they demanded to explain more precisely the notion “world” and the division between nature and grace again. Then Mgr. Garrone presented propositions during the general meeting of the Commission for schema XIII. Mgr. McGrath intervened for the signs of the time. Häring would have appreciated the revision of the relation between the Church and the world. Rahner stressed the dialogue in this matter. It was decided to make several sub-commissions to deal with the proposed points. Congar worked on the nature-grace problem, the historical realism and the progress. As we can see, this meeting was dynamic. Congar was full of enthusiasm.³⁴ We can perceive real collegiality of the Council fathers and the theologians who worked toward common goal. This example represents precisely Congar’s understanding of the Council. He opposed to H. Küng’s point of view that the theologians themselves should be the bearers of the doctrinal authority in the

³³ “Je demande la parole. [...] Ottaviani rapelle que les *periti* ne peuvent pas parler que si un Père les y invite (ce n’est pas la seule fois qu’il m’élimine).” *Ibid.*, 110.

³⁴ For more informations about the September meetings see *Ibid.*, 123–131.

Church. According to Congar, theologians were not supposed to lead the Church but to inform it.³⁵

1965 was a decisive period in the development of schema XIII. Nevertheless the document was still without a name. The meetings of several commissions and subcommissions continued as well as the hard work of many theological experts including Congar. The contribution of Polish bishops – the so-called *project Polonais* (as Congar called it) – is to be mentioned as a very important contribution to the continuous discussion about the relationship between the Church and the modern world. Why is it necessary to mention this event? The representative of Polish proposal was nobody else but Mgr. Karol Wojtyła, the archbishop of Cracow. Consequently, Wojtyła and Congar worked closely in a small sub-group.³⁶ Thus, we can observe the encounter of *nouvelle théologie* with the theological view of the later Pope.

Congar respected Wojtyła and appreciated his important remarks to schema XIII. He saw Wojtyła as a prominent personality and charismatic bishop.³⁷ Congar was in accordance with Wojtyła's suggestion that the document should not be a reflection of questions of the modern world only, but also a reflection of responses which the modern world expects. Vice versa, Wojtyła supported Congar's proposal of *ordo dis-cendorum*.³⁸ Even though the Polish bishop and the French theologian cooperated together on the common goal of the renewal of the Church it is clear that we cannot speak about perfect mutual comprehension. Congar noted the critique of Polish project in his diaries. He disagreed especially with the cultural presuppositions of the Polish bishops because they were influenced by specific socio-culture context. While the main interest of scheme XIII was the context of the entire world, the Polish draft, in spite of several theological advantages, derives from particular circumstances of socialistic Poland where Catholics were majority. Congar, expressed at the end of the Council: "Les Polonais

³⁵ See G. Flynn, *Yves Congar's Vision of the Church in a World of Unbelief* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 59.

³⁶ See. Y. Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile II*, 315.

³⁷ "Mgr Wojtyła fait des remarques d'une extrême gravité. [...] Wojtyła fait une grand impression. Sa personnalité s'impose. Il rayonne d'elle un fluide, attirance, une certaine force prophétique très calm, mais irrécusable." *Ibid.*, 312.

³⁸ See *Ibid.*, 312 and 316.

sont toujours un peuple à part, avec qui il est difficile de s'entendre: ils ont leurs idées et ne cherchent à s'entendre avec personne.”³⁹

Wojtyła was open to the *nouvelle théologie* but from the point of view of his later pontificate he did not see Congar's attitude as a platform for complex reform of the Church. Paul VI – the Pope of the Council – instead saw in theology of French scholars like de Lubac, Chenu, Congar, etc. new *locus theologicus* or a very important message for the Church *ad intra* as well as for the world *ad extra*.⁴⁰ As a conclusion we can agree with the following statement:

Pope John Paul's Thomism owes far more to that of Garrigou-Lagrange than it does to the modern school, though it is the theology of Karl Rahner, Yves Congar, and Edward Schillebeeckx, all influenced by *la nouvelle théologie*, which had the most impact upon the documents of Vatican II.⁴¹

It seems to me that this recognition is very important. The Pastoral Constitution stands on the basis of progressive theology of many scholars who wanted to find a true reform of the Church. Nevertheless, the latter development and interpretation of the Council went in other sense. Thus, the attempt to solve the long crisis of Church in modern world through the Council was a glimpse of new method which was abandoned in many respects afterwards.

It is necessary to emphasize at the end of this section that we followed only Congar's intentions within the schema XVII then schema XIII in the later *Gaudium et Spes*. Congar worked day by day on several documents of the Council. One day, for instance, he was involved in *De Ecclesia* and another in *De oecumenismo*. After the enclosure of the Council, Congar made a note into his diary which eloquently summarizes his contribution to the development of the Council documents.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 480–481.

⁴⁰ In this regard we can see the Paul's VI encyclical letter *Populorum progressio*. It is probably the only one magisterial document which quotes the theologians of *nouvelle théologie* as an inspiration and message for the Christians and all the people of good will as well. See Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (AAS 59, 1967), 257–299.

⁴¹ M. Walsh, “From Karol Wojtyła to John Paul II: Life and Times”, in G. Mannion (ed.), *The Vision of John Paul II: Assessing His Thought and Influence* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2008), 15.

Personne n'a aucune idée de ce qu'est ma vie et de ce que je puis à peine aviser au quotidien, en n'ayant plus le temps ni de lire ni d'écrire. Ils ne voient pas que je suis demandé partout et que ce que je donne ici et là se trouve en réalité multiplié par deux cents. Souvent je pense: seule l'eschatologie résoudra ce problème insoluble de ma pauvre vie!⁴²

Congar and the Interpretation of the Pastoral Constitution

When we compare the contents of the *Gaudium et Spes* and the themes of Congar's theology in his writings at the time before the Council and in the years during the Council's sessions it seems to be clear that the chapter IV from the first part of the Pastoral Constitution is very influenced by the thinking of the French Dominican. This chapter deals with the role of the Church in the modern world and that is the point which links the previous doctrinal chapters about the anthropology to the concrete problems in the second part. Congar understands the chapter IV as the heart of the whole Constitution.⁴³ Let us see some interesting points and emphases of how Congar deals with these six innovative articles.⁴⁴

Congar's basic thesis is: "[I]t is impossible to separate work for the welfare of mankind from the preaching of the gospel."⁴⁵ Thus he claims that the Church has two main tasks. The first one is the mission among all people, and the second one, the responsibility for the world. *Gaudium et Spes*, in my opinion, was the first confirmation and confession of the magisterium of the Church that history has positive and important aspects for Christian theology in the modern period. The Pastoral Constitution deals, on the one hand, with the mission of the Church to transform the world and humankind through the Easter event of Jesus Christ. This transformation, on the other hand, is not the only activity of the Church. There is something else which derives from

⁴² *Ibid.*, 565–566.

⁴³ See Y. Congar, "The Role of the Church in the Modern World", in Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. V, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World*, (New York, London: Herder and Herder, 1969), 204.

⁴⁴ The chapter consists of the articles 40–45 of the *Gaudium et spes*.

⁴⁵ See Y. Congar, "The Role of the Church in the Modern World", 204.

Easter and from the celebration of the sacraments of the Church but which is also beyond the purely transforming activity. There is the challenge and obligation for all baptized Christians to live in the world and to be responsible for the circumstances in which they live.

The basis of this function of the Church, according to Congar, is clearly biblical. In the Old Testament we read about God the Creator of man and all things. The New Testament presents the evident central role of Christ who is the head of both, the Church and all the things. The realization of God's salvific plan has consequences for the whole *cosmos*. "This fact," in Congar's words, "imposes on Christians the duty of working in the world to establish an order in harmony with the gift of truth and grace they have received in Jesus Christ."⁴⁶ Christ is the revealer of the truth about humanity and if the Church preaches Christ then it is obliged to preach and discover the truth about humanity as well. This very important thing was not always recognized by the Church. Congar means that within this topic the document should say more about the mistakes and false attitudes of the Church in the history.⁴⁷

Thus, the basis of the relation between the Church and the world is the person.⁴⁸ The world is the scene of the history of people and the place of the realization of God's saving plan. Both, the Church and the world seek the similar goal of human beings, better future or, in brief, the future of humanity.⁴⁹ The seeking of the future is what *Gaudium et Spes* called the integral vocation of humanity. Translated into theological terms, salvation does not mean escape from history, but it is to be sought within it.

The new attitude to the theological reflection of history requires a new approach to the relation between the Church and the state. Already the Preparatory Theological commission set up by John XXIII prepared one chapter of the scheme *De Ecclesia* which dealt with this question. But it was a summary of the post-tridentine magisterial theology only and nothing new was said. The result was that the scheme

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁴⁷ "But Vatican II made even less room for historians than it did for exegetes." *Ibid.*, 206.

⁴⁸ John Paul II repeated this important message in his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* and this statement became the basic symbol of his entire pontificate.

⁴⁹ See, Y. Congar, "The Role of the Church in the Modern World", 207.

De Ecclesia presented de facto medieval theology about sovereignty of the Church above the state. In this point of view, the Church mediated God's law and the princes were supposed to reign in accordance with the divine law proclaimed by Church. This attitude is deeply juridical and it is an abstract theory. There is no place for any anthropology and, of course, there is no place for any theological reflection of history. *Temporalia et saecularia* are subordinated to *spiritualia et coelestia*. In modern theological terms instead, anthropology is bound up with eschatology in exclusive way.⁵⁰

"Vatican II has finally turned the page on the Middle Ages."⁵¹ It seems to be very important that the statements about the relation between the state and the Church, although this term is not used in the documents of the Council, took place in the Pastoral Constitution instead of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.⁵² That means that the problem of this relationship is the problem of the relation between the faith and history, and between the gospel and civilization. The Church – the People of God – is not separated from the world but it exists in the midst of the world. The faithful proceed to the eternity but it does not discharge them from their earthly tasks. The Church recognizes the positive value and the autonomy of this world and it does not reduce the world to a temporary place for the people before the life after death. The salvation means fulfillment and transformation. Finally, the transcendent mystery is revealed only in the history and in the particular culture and context of the human life.⁵³

Behind this positive theology of the history and new attitude to the world the conception of the relation between nature and grace is there

⁵⁰ "In this medieval perspective, little active service was expected from the ordinary laity. They had primarily to obey and live according to the laws. The princes were expected to enact laws in harmony with the law of God, as expounded by priest, and to place their sword at the service of the faith." *Ibid.*, 209.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁵² "À mon avis, il n'y a aucun doute: sa place est dans le schéma XVII." Y. Congar, *Mon journal du Concile I.*, 376.

⁵³ See Congar's description of the implications of the Pastoral Constitution within the relation between the Church and the state. Y. Congar, "The Role of the Church in the Modern World", 211.

reevaluated.⁵⁴ According to Congar, these facts were too separated because of the mistaken interpretation of Saint Thomas by cardinal Cajetan and by the scholastic philosopher Suárez in the 16th century. On the contrary, *Gaudium et Spes* deals with another theological statement. Of course, there is certainty of the absolute gratuitousness of human vocation to be a child of God. Nevertheless, this vocation is intended from the beginning. It means that there is integral vocation of all people because all the people are created to image of God. Consequently, the fulfillment of this integral vocation which we can translate as a continuous becoming more and more human is the present event. It is not something far in the eschatology but it is also here in the midst of the world. The world is not understood as an opponent of the Church any more. *Gaudium et Spes* stressed in many places the hidden presence of Christ and Holy Spirit in the world.⁵⁵ “In this respect everything can be sacred to the Christians.”⁵⁶ Congar already pointed out these ideas in his book *Vaste Monde, ma Paroisse* (1959) before the opening of the Council. He used the words “Church” and the “world” as correlative terms. In his opinion the Church means the salvation for the world and the world means the health for the Church. The People of God is not isolated in a kind of vacuum between the earth and heaven. Congar sees that Christian teaching of the New World does not mean the dissolution of this world. The new world will not be totally different from our world. The Christianity is a big corrective to the deeply spiritual Platonism and also to the ideology of pure materialism. The theology can appreciate the importance of the present world in the history of salvation.⁵⁷ When we read *Gaudium et Spes* we can see it clearly. Especially the article 22 which deals with the universal presence of the Holy Spirit in the world is a significant consequence of Congar’s idea about relation between world and God’s grace.

⁵⁴ Here is important to mention the work of Henri de Lubac, the book *Surnaturel* which opens the door to the new thinking about relation between the nature and grace or the supernatural. See H. de Lubac, *Surnaturel: études historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946).

⁵⁵ See articles of the Pastoral Constitution 57, 22, 26, 38, 41.

⁵⁶ Y. Congar, “The Role of the Church in the Modern World”, 213.

⁵⁷ See T. F. O’Meara, “Yves Congar Theologian of Grace in a Wide World”, 375–379.

Conclusion

Yves Congar, in fact, was an architect or one of the main architects of the reform of Vatican II in the field of ecclesiology. During his career before the Council, precisely as a teacher of ecclesiology in Le Saulchoir and then in Paris, he pointed out many objections to the form of the Church's structure and to the Church's self-understanding in his time. These ideas found their fulfillment, after the very hard work of their author, in the documents of Vatican II.⁵⁸ Congar undoubtedly influenced many Council fathers. As G. Flynn summarizes it, Congar's influence consisted: "namely, [in] the transition from a predominantly juridical conception of the Church to a more eschatological vision of the Church as the People of God, centred again on the paschal mystery."⁵⁹ Congar focused the attention on the eschatological tension between *already, but not yet*. It led the Church to be more humble and more open to the world in positive way. He also emphasized the tradition of the Church very much, especially in the case of rediscovering the real conciliarity in Vatican II, which is one of the essential elements of the Church. This deep experience of the Council helped to overcome apologetic and defensive ecclesiology of the post-tridentine theology. Negative⁶⁰ theological attitude, in fact, began with radical reinterpretation of the Council of Trent hand in hand with the ultramontanist and with the assimilation of the modern type of thinking in

⁵⁸ According to Congar's diary, he was deeply involved in following documents of the council. On *Lumen gentium* he did first redaction of many articles of the first and the second chapter and some other particular places. He worked on the second chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*. Congar wrote the introduction and conclusion of *De oecumenismo* i.e. *Unitatis redintegration*, likewise within the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions. In *De Missionibus* he made first chapter in its every single word and in cooperation with Ratzinger prepared the number 8. He cooperated with entire project of the Declaration on the Religious Freedom. He worked very hard on the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterium ordinis*. Last but not least, Congar contributed within the scheme XVII, later scheme XIII which is finally called *Gaudium et spes*. He was involved especially in chapter I and IV of the Declaration. See Y. Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile II*, 511.

⁵⁹ G. Flynn, *Yves Congar's Vision of the Church in a World of Unbelief*, 54.

⁶⁰ The word *negative* does not mean here *apophatic theology* of the church Fathers or mystics. I use the term *negative* here in the sense of negative or even antagonistic approach of the Church to the world and to every *otherness* in the late modernity.

the 19th century. It led to the formation of the Catholic master narrative which was completely closed to others. Thus the Church became a ghetto, a special world in itself. Paradoxically, the so-called *modernists* were much more traditional than the so-called *anti-modernists*. Modernist theologians, it should be honestly mentioned that not without mistakes, continued in the real Church tradition of the engagement with contemporary culture, philosophy and the problems of the world. They tried to give answers to the questions of the people at their time. Anti-modernists would have preferred to stand at the firm point and they preserved only one form of theology, if you like ecclesiology. The Vatican II rediscovered right meaning of the tradition, thanks to Congar and other theologians of the *nouvelle théologie* movement and many other open-minded bishops and scholars. In 1960 Congar published book with title *La Tradition et les traditions*. He showed the living tradition of the Church and distinguished the Tradition in singular from the traditions in plural – which include many different forms of it in different local, temporal and cultural contexts.⁶¹ This is a perpetual process in history. Thus, Congar saw that the Church contains diversity and plurality of the opinions. His works introduced this idea into the Council. We can see it in *Dei Verbum*, where this distinction is implicitly present. Then *Lumen Gentium* says about one universal Church which could be realized only in the plurality of particular Churches. From there is a straight way toward *Gaudium et Spes* and its challenges to the relation between the Church and the world and above all, the responsibility of the People of God for the present world and their future.

Congar knew very well that Church could not give any simple answer to each question. He understood that Catholicism was not monolithic structure with the centre on the coast of the river Tiber. Vatican II, the Council of the Church, showed the image of the Church in the midst of the world. Thus, the Council represents very important point in the history of the Church and its living tradition of teaching. Yves Congar never accepted the interpretation that Vatican II was solely a pastoral Council.⁶² It teaches us that we can find new forms and paradigms of

⁶¹ See commentary on this work in J. Famerée, G. Routhier, *Yves Congar*, 117–147.

⁶² See G. Flynn, *Yves Congar's Vision of the Church in a World of Unbelief*, 57; or Congar's own words: "Le premier but du concile est doctrinal: protéger la doctrine,

theology in the future. We can invent new solutions of the problems than the Council proposed. Nevertheless, the cooperation between the bishops and theologians within Vatican II and its doctrinal goals about the image and essence of the Church, ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, religious freedom, etc. have to remain in our minds forever.

Congar and his colleagues disclosed the richness of the Church tradition in the biblical sources, patristic writings, liturgy, and so on. We are called to follow them and to discover out the richness of the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

Abstract: *This article explores Yves Congar's contribution to II Vatican Council and his influence on Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, especially. Author makes an analysis of Congar's own diaries from the time of the Council as well as other relevant historical sources. The paper is divided into three sections. First section points out short introduction to the main Congar's pre-Conciliar theological works. Second section refers to general historical information about formation of Gaudium et Spes. Nevertheless, main goal of this part is to present Congar's original contribution to Gaudium et Spes regarding his diaries where he summarized development of the Pastoral Constitution day by day. Analysis of Congar's diaries discloses difficulties in the course of discussion about the relationship between the Church and the modern world, which is the main topic of the Pastoral Constitution. Apart from that, Congar's diaries show courage of several Council Fathers and theologians with responsible dialogue the thought of the modern world of that time. Third section explores Congar's theological interpretations of Gaudium et Spes after the Council. The goal of this paper is not only to offer historical information about origin and development of one of the most important Council document. Apart from that, author wants to open discussion about hermeneutics of the II Vatican Council regarding relevant historical sources.*

Key words: Yves Congar – Gaudium et Spes – II Vatican Council – Church – Modern World

le dépôt. Une doctrine integra, non diminuta.” Y. Congar, *Mon Journal du Concile I.*, 210.